The Progressive Review

Nbr 294 January 1991

Letting Bush get away with it

Within a year of taking office, George Bush had invaded Panama, violating not only the US Constitution, but the UN Charter, the Charter of the Organization of American States, the Nuremburg Principles, the Panama Canal Treaty and various other international laws. His drug war has been a jungle of constitutional violations and evasions. Less well known, largely because the press has chosen to ignore it, has been Bush's war against open government. Several million Americans in government and the defense industry have been pressured into signing gag agreements despite a congressional prohibition on spending money for such a purpose. Bush has quietly, and with few media murmurs, embarked upon a policy of putting as much of the United States government under cover as he can, clamping down on whistleblowers and attempting to make security clearances arbitrarily unobtainable or revokable without due process.

All this, of course, is before we get the answers to how deeply George Bush was involved in Iran-Contra and or whether he was part the scheme to delay the release of the hostages in Iran until after the 1988 election. And before, of course, his proposed commencement of war against Iraq without the congressional declaration the Constitution clearly and simply requires.

Yet despite this astonishing record, Bush does not deserve all the blame. The dirtiest secret in Washington is the extent to which those institutions intended to provide a counterweight to excessive executive power have capitulated to that power. As far as any issue remotely touching on 'national security' is concerned, Washington practices three-monkey politics: Congress prohibits no evil, the courts punish no evil; and the press reports no evil.

Thus it is not surprising that for more than three months after the Iraqi invasion, George Bush had a clear field to pursue a policy adolescent in its inspiration, hypocritical in its rationale, counter-productive in its goals, hyperbolic in its rhetoric, incoherent and inconsistent in its justification, and reckless in its risks.

There were, of course, the few in Congress and the media who understood what was going on from the start. Fifty some members of Congress prepared a legal brief challenging the president's right to make war without legislative consent. Scott Armstrong wrote an article for the *Columbia Journalism Review* listing 64 questions that reporters were failing to ask about US policy towards Iraq.

But the tone of the early press coverage was set by the *Chicago Tribune,* which bleated on its front page August 8:

> In a single stroke Tuesday, George Bush... brought the mantle of leadership back to Washington.

That same day, notes *Extra!,* the *Washington Post's* E.J. Dionne managed to produce some subtle if anachronistic seminal red-baiting:

> Soviet support for US moves has quelled criticism on the left.

And as late as November 30 the *New York Times* reported:

> The House Speaker, Thomas S. Foley of Washington, and the House Republican Leader, Robert H. Michel of Illinois, told Mr. Bush at a private White House luncheon that he might prevail in Congress if he pressed for a vote now, but could fall short of a clear-cut mandate to use force against Iraq this winter, and might well set up a divisive debate among lawmakers. They advised Mr. Bush not to call a special session of Congress on the Persian Gulf.

This summed up both the prevailing morality and courage of official Washington in the first

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months of the crisis. Here we had the Democratic Speaker essentially telling the President that it's okay to trash the Constitution. The question is not what the law says; it's a matter of whether you've got the votes. And God forbid that we should have a divisive debate over whether to put 400,000 American troops at risk for a cause not even its advocates can explain, let alone defend. The undeniable thrill of war had been felt and who could resist it? As General Sherman wrote his wife, "I begin to regard the death and mangling of a couple thousand men as a small affair; a kind of morning dash."

In early December, however, the tone of the political and press discussion of the crisis changed dramatically. With Bush having doubled our troop commitment and called up the reserves, the constituents were getting restless. The gap between what was happening on the tube and what was happening down the street closed markedly. Two out of three former chairs of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and seven of eight former secretaries of defense urged Bush to go slow and give sanctions time to work. And in his mild mannered way, a former president, Jimmy Carter, alluded to what others were too busy to notice: in a world growing rapidly beyond war, the greatest remaining warmongers were Saddam Hussein and George Bush.

The cavalry of the ordinary concerned and the Gray Berets of the establishment had come to the city's rescue giving many in Congress and the press new convictions about which to have some courage.

Bush has spoken of Hitler in connection with this affair. But when you speak of Hitler you bring up memories not only of small countries being crushed, but a large country being crushed by a leader with contempt for its institutions, its democracy and the decent sharing of ominous decisions. You bring up memories of an intimidated legislature and a cowed press. And you bring up memories of brutal actions also carried out in the name of a new world order. It is a dangerous metaphor to arouse. As *The New Yorker* wrote on December 10: "From the beginning President Bush's policy in the Gulf. . .was better suited to a dictatorship than to a democracy."

Maybe it's all just another Bush deception. Maybe when it's over, the President will buy the Iraqis out of Kuwait the same way he bought dozens of countries into the UN resolution. But in one respect he has clearly shown his hand: he'll do whatever he can get away with. And much of Congress and the media will help him. -- *Sam Smith*

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The other crisis

The failure of Congress extends far beyond its inordinately slow reaction to Bush's excesses. The Constitution calls for Congress to declare a war and not, by common consent, simply to ignore it. For example, a war supported by a wimpy do-what-you-got-to-do-George resolution, however, would not give Congress cover; it would merely make it a co-conspirator against the constitutional law.

Yet to an increasing number of people in power in Washington, whether Republican or Democratic, in government or in journalism, the Constitution is simply irrelevant to current concerns. Such carefully debated sections as the one that vested war-making powers in the Congress are implicitly considered, as General William Odom explicitly said recently, "old formalities obsolete for most situations."

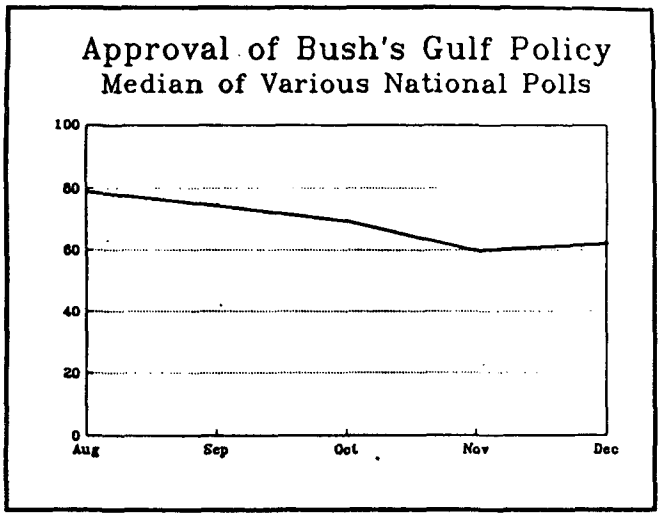
Thus George Bush can announce that "I have an obligation as president to conduct the foreign policy of this country in the way I see fit," and no one in power challenges him, despite more than a half-dozen clauses of the Constitution that contradict his contention, including those relating to the power of the legislature, treaty-making, regulation of commerce, war powers, the raising of an army and navy, the organization and calling forth of the militia, and tariffs.

Arthur Schlesinger Jr, in the November 12 *New York Times,* wrote:

> Secretary Baker suggests that the president's role as commander in chief has become a sufficient source of authority to go to war. The Framers would hardly have accepted this argument. In the 69th Federalist, Alexander Hamilton observed that the commander-in-chief clause granted the president no more than the command of the armed forces -- in contrast to the British king, whose power 'extends to the declaring of war and to the raising and regulating of fleets and armies --all which, by the Constitution under consideration, would appertain to the legislature.'

Law professors Leon Friedman and Burt Newborne added on December 2 that the delegates to the constitutional convention overwhelmingly rejected Pierce Butler's proposal that the president be given power to declare war. Eldridge Gerry of Massachusetts said that "he never expected to hear in a republic a motion to empower the executive to declare war." George Mason of Virginia said the executive is "not safely to be trusted with it" and that he was for "clogging rather than facilitating war; but for facilitating peace."

Ironically, the president of the Soviet Union has declared that for his country "the use of armed forces outside the country without sanction from the Congress is ruled out categorically, once and for all. The only exception will be in the case of a surprise armed attack from outside." It would appear that Mr. Gorbachev is more a strict constructionist than many in Washington.



The Iraqi situation is only the latest and most visible sign of the indifference of the media and Congress to fundamental constitutional issues. You

the last session Congress passed legislation that essentially legalized many of the worst crimes of Iran-Contra. It would give the president power to conduct covert operations and to use corporations and foreign countries to do so, thus allowing the president to carry out private wars and operations without Congress even having the leverage of withholding funds. Only 70 members of the House stood with Barbara Boxer when she attempted to prevent the covert action legislation. Did the media that spent hours and pages on the Iran-Contra rise as one to tell Americans about this? Not until Bush vetoed the legislation, and then mainly to give credibility to his incredible argument that the legislation would tie his hands. -- *S. S.*

Whose war is it?

George Bush's behavior in this affair is bizarre even by presidential standards, let alone constitutional ones. He has barely consulted the joint chiefs of staff while making a commitment of American troops close to that in Vietnam. When Defense Secretary Cheney made a televised announcement that the US might be sending more troops to Saudi Arabia, Gen. Colin Powell learned of it while on his way back from the Middle East. And the president has clearly not consulted Congress.

The question inevitably arises: whose war is this going to be? Sununu's? Cheney's? Millie's?

Some of the speculation has bordered on the grotesque. The emir of conventional journalism,

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David Broder, wrote on November 18: "It is almost impossible to imagine a more serious, calm, cautious, rational and prudent set of people than those the president has assembled,"

The New York Times's R. W. Apple Jr., who got off to a bad start in August characterizing Bush as "tough" and "statesmanlike," had recovered enough by December to write:

Right from the start, foreign policy professionals have complained that Mr. Bush, something of a foreign policy professional himself, has drawn the circle too tight, limiting discussions of really important positions to himself, Secretary of State James A. Baker 3rd, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and Brent Scowcroft, his national security advisor.

One foreign editor on the case described the vision of the White House as being as though looking through a "rifle sight." There is no apparent consideration of long-term effects, cultural factors, the links with other regional issues or history. I suspect that for George Bush, invading Iraq would not really be a war at all, but as with Noriega, more of a personal match -- tennis by other means. An old preppie treating the whole world as his country club.

It produces odd and scary results, such as the serial explanations for our Gulf presence offered by administration figures, some of them even in contradiction as when Lawrence Eagleburger said he thought the war was "about oil" and Cheney said that was "hog-wash."

As late as the end of November, the administration couldn't decide what this business was about. In the manner of the GOP stumbling on Willie Horton, the convenient and unsupportable discovery of Iraq's iminent "nuclear capability" (after a *New York Times/CBS* poll showed that 54% of the public thought this was a good enough reason to take military action) seemed a temporary godsend. Wrote the *Times* on November 26:

An Administration official said the survey results had been noted by the White House, which is also looking for an argument that will sway the public.

The sentence is familiar. We've read it dozens of times during political campaigns, although in campaigns not as many people get killed. What we have been seeing is the way war would be if it were planned by a political consultant. -- *S.S.*

Best one sentence summation of the Bush policy comes from Senator Bob Kerry who said recently, "The president has quite suddenly staked our nation's honor to an escalation he has not thought through of a commitment he has not justified to defend a world order he has not described, and quite possibly to launch a war he does not have the authority to declare."

The only good Saddam is a live one

Mowahid Shah

The cardinal rule of Iraqi politics is that political losers leave feet first.

Were Sadham Hussein to give in to Washington's demand for an unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait, he'd wind up on Baghdad's 'Boot Hill' within 24 hours.

Saddam is helped by the fact that most Iraqis have never reconciled themselves to the existence of a legitimate sovereign Kuwait. They see modern Kuwait as the product of a western conspiracy to control Muslim natural resources through the pliant House of Sabah, and point to the fact that its frontiers were drawn by the British in 1923 -- in a move that also deprived Iraq of major access to the Persian Gulf.

But this popular consensus also means that any back-tracking on Kuwait without a substantial *quid pro quo* would leave Saddam highly vulnerable at home, particularly among those already seeking his ouster. Most important in this category are the Iranian-backed Shiite opposition grouped around the Tehran-based Supreme Assembly for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, led by respected religious scholar Ayatollah Baqr-al-Hakim. His elder brother was assassinated by Iraqi agents while attending an international Islamic conference in Khartoum in 1988.

Other dissident groups include Syria-backed Kurdish separatists (whose main chief, Masoud, is a son of the legendary guerrilla leader Mullah Mustafa Barzani), anti-Saddam Baathists, former Army officers, and the tiny Communist Party. The approximately 600,000 Iraqi refugees living in Iran also provide a solid recruiting base for the anti-Saddam opposition.

By leaving Saddam with no face-saving exit, the United States inadvertently may be digging a grave not only for the Iraqi strongman but for the Bush presidency. If so, it will be the third U.S. presidency to be tarnished by the Middle East during a decade.

It is the image of defiance amidst a sea of Arab obsequiousness that explains Saddam's current popularity in the Arab world. Saddam is seen at the grassroots as the spear-carrier of Arab dignity avenging past humiliations. Washington officially may acknowledge no connection between Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, but in the minds of Muslims that linkage is now inextricable.

The physical destruction of Saddam and his military machine may let loose vendetta-seeking forces who will live and thrive on a feud in the same manner as the legendary Assassins who were the scourge of medieval Baghdad in the 11th and 12th centuries. By eliminating Saddam through military action, the U.S. could render the region and the world unsafe for "moderate" Muslims, thus jeopardizing its long-term interests. Since Israel would inevitably be blamed for orchestrating the mayhem, it too would become a prime target.

The survival of Saddam, ironically, would not be counter-productive for U.S. aims in the Mideast. Saddam the Survivor is a lesser threat than Saddam the Martyr. And there is no doubt that in the event of a U.S. attack, Saddam would cast himself as a defender of the Prophet's legacy.

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Little known in the West, two of Islam's most emotionally potent shrines, Kerbala (where the Prophet's martyred grandson Hussain is buried) and Najaf (the burial site of Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law) are in Iraq. Their desecration by American weapons and forces would have an explosive effect on the mood of Muslims worldwide.

The rejection of Saddam's peace overtures reminded many in the Arab world of the fate of Arafat's initiative at Geneva two years ago of recognizing Israel and renouncing terrorism. The perception is widespread that there is little virtue in moderation.

In a post-Gulf-war scenario, Washington would be compelled to seek out Muslim friends but would find few takers. U.S. policy makers are fond of talking about peace, security and stability in the Middle East. They need to add one more word; justice.

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Ignoring the boat people

Thomas S. Martin

Since the fall of Saign in 1975 hundreds of thousands of people have fled from communist regime. Some are "economic migrants," in search of a better life. More are genuine "politicals" whose lives are in danger because they were in some way connected with South Vietnamese government or its American allies. The lucky ones got out before April 1975. The rest are "boat people" who have crossed the South China Sea at great personal risk to reach Hong Kong, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, or the Philippines. There plight is well known even if their numbers are uncertain.

But the Hong Kong refugees are a special case. Upon arrival they are processed into one of the dozen camps, some in urban areas, others on outlying islands with primitive facilities. The government's numbers are suspect, but the count is between 55,000 and 60,000 and growing. The notorious Whitehead Camp alone contains 34,000 men, women and children in crowded factory buildings converted into barracks. Gradually they pass through a screening process to determine whether they will be granted immigrant status. Very few are. The rest remain in the camps. Some Vietnamese, lucky enough to be residents of "open camps," are permitted to have jobs on the outside. The majority, however, are in "closed camps." In these Stygian prisons medical care is episodic; there are no recreational or educational facilities, and no work to do; internal security is virtually nonexistent. Families are separated, especially when a woman is pregnant: giving birth in the camps is not allowed.

There are few places on the planet more corrupt than the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong. The concentration of money is equalled only by the degradation and poverty in the back streets and alleys. This disparity, coupled with its strategic location at the hub of many communication and transport networks, makes Hong Kong a criminals' paradise. The black market, gambling, drugs and prostitution are controlled by the "Triads," crime syndicates whose influence reaches into the highest levels of government and pervades the police forces. In half a dozen years the colony will be handed over to China, but foreign investment continues and new skyscrapers rise above the harbor. In a recent poll 30% of the population admitted that they were trying to leave before 1997; only those with connections and money will make it. Grinding poverty exists literally alongside luxury unimaginable elsewhere in Asia. With a population density of nearly 15,000 per square mile, life for most people is unhealthy, crowded and stressful. For the Vietnamese refugees in the detention camps, life is a nightmare.

Admittedly, the Hong Kong government has more than its share of problems. The prospect of imminent reunion with China occupies the minds of the political and economic elite. But all observers agree that the boat people are victims, not to neglect or low placement on the priority list, but of active oppression and exploitation by organized crime in direct collusion with the government. A Vietnam native who emigrated to Hong Kong several decades ago, and now has a successful career, says that organized crime syndicates enjoy free run of the camps, profiting from extortion, drug sales and prostitution. Gangs of youth --Hong Kong residents, not refugees -- roam the camps at will, raping and occasionally murdering. The police, who seem quite capable of keeping the Vietnamese in, are "helpless" when it comes to keeping the criminals out. During 1990 the number of new refugees dropped sharply, as news of Hong Kong's harsh policies spread in Vietnam.

The situation became a crisis in December 1989, when Hong Kong implemented its repatriation policy. Unable to absorb any more refugees, the colony decided to send most of them back to Vietnam on the grounds that they were merely "economic migrants" and in no real danger from the Hanoi government. (In fact, all will face penalties for trying to leave illegally.) The screening process was blatantly unfair: refugees were often interrogated by officials who do not know Vietnamese, and no effort was made to acquaint them with their legal rights. It is possible to appeal a repatriation decision, but the hearings are conducted in secret and without legal representation for the subject of the case. According to Amnesty International, the officials conducting the hearings are not even aware of the human rights record of the Hanoi government. Western nations and organizations immediately protested the policy -- and so did Hanoi. Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach has repeatedly stated that forced repatriation is a crime. "If they are not volunteers and are against repatriation," he says, "they are out of our control." At the same time Bush will not accept a coercive solution: as Lawrence Eagleburger recently stated, the administration has an "absolute abhorrence of the concept of forced repatriation under any circumstances." Many observers believe that Vietnam and the United States are taking an identical line because both governments hope to normalize relations. The first fifty-one boat people were

The British Sunday Correspondent recently ran a contest for the best definition of *working class.* Lawrence Sutton won a crate of ale for the following:
Wearing overalls on weekdays, painting somebody else's house to earn money? You're working class. Wearing overalls at weekends, painting your own house to save money? You're middle class.

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forcibly repatriated a year ago. Many more have been slated for ejection, but the government appears to be hesitating in the face of international opposition. It has promised to provide better interpreters to help with the screening process, and to give refugees access to their records. It is ironic that the Crown Colony finds it necessary to punish the Vietnamese for trying to do what many Hong Kong residents are doing: hurrying to escape a Communist regime.

The mainstream media prefer to ignore the situation in the Hong Kong camps, and so most Americans are unaware of it. The federal government, of course, does not want to offend Hong Kong or Britain, both valuable strategic allies; Washington also does not wish to be distracted from its diplomatic flirtations with Hanoi. Several international women's groups have attempted to investigate the refugee camps but have met with little success. With the help of Refugees International, Vietnamese-Americans in California have launched an effort to aid their compatriots, but there is no way to ensure that material and financial aid will make it through Hong Kong's corruption to the intended recipients. Commendably, the United Nations and it Refugee Council have not given up on the boat people, as so many others have done; but UN efforts concentrate on a ultimate solution, not on immediate conditions in the camps. In this country only Amnesty International and Refugees International are working directly on the question.

The People's Republic of China has served notice that it wants this problem "solved" before taking possession of the colony in 1997. Thus Hong Kong has been in the forefront of international efforts to relocate the boat people. The United States and the ASEAN nations, meeting in early 1990, set a July 1 deadline for settling the issue. Predictably, nothing happened, except that ASEAN governments began turning away boat people. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Thorvald Stoltenberg sponsored a meeting in Hanoi in September 1990, with all concerned parties (except the refugees) represented. The result was a new category. "non-volunteers who are not opposed to repatriation." The translation, according to Hong Kong's governor, is that refugees "who don't actively voluteer" may nevertheless be repatriated. Stoltenberg will be responsible for identifying these involuntary volunteers. The Bush administration nonobjected, as long as "force or coercion" are not employed. Still, the ASEAN states and Hong Kong would prefer that the United States take all the refugees.

Characteristically, the Hong Kong authorities have tried to gently blackmail the Americans, asking for money to build a new camp on Tai A Chau Island. A temporary relocation camp on Guam has also been suggested. President Bush claims that such a camp would be a magnet for all sorts of refugees, aside from the obvious problems of housing tens of thousands of Vietnamese; the administration also fears that the next step would be the transfer of all the boat people to the United States. While the diplomats maneuver the refugees continue to suffer. Recent news from Hong Kong mentions unrest in the camps -- graffiti, posters and occasional confrontations protesting the September nonsolution. Meanwhile the degradation of the refugees in the camps is growing more serious month by month. The world has rightly focused its attention on finding a home for the boat people; but it must not forget about what is happening in the camps in the meantime. The governments of Great Britain and Hong Kong could surely, without much effort or expenditure, improve the standard of living and provide minimum police protection. Only corruption in high places -- and international apathy -- stand between the boat people and humane treatment.

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The Weather Report

The Petro-Crusades

If George Bush goes to war without a congressional declaration, impeachment is definitely in order. Bush, in fact, may be the only president who qualified for impeachment even before he was elected. Of course, the conventional progressive wisdom has been that you can't impeach Bush because you'd get Quayle. This problem is easily resolved, however, by applying to the situation simple principles of criminal law, such as various conspiracy statutes. If Bush had decided to rob a bank rather than invade Iraq, there would be no question that Quayle would be considered an accessory before, during and after the fact.

A nationwide poll finds that 52% of American collegians approve of the US military activities in the Persian Gulf, but 65% of them said they would not volunteer for the armed services.

If Bush gets tired of his Hussein shtick, who will be his next target, next year's equivalent of Hitler? Here's a hot tip from deep inside the American right. The Council for Inter-American Security is running a contest to predict the exact date of Fidel Castro's fall from power. Grand prize is a free trip to a "liberated Cuba." Several righties in the loop have already entered, with Jeane J. Kirkpatrick giving the end of 1991 as her target. Eight of eleven listed entries offer dates in 1991. It appears that Castro was the designated post-Noriega Hitler but got temporarily bounced by the sudden obstreperousness of Saddam. You have been warned.

The new world order, much like the old, is something of a horse-rabbit stew. The US provides 400,000 troops, takes most of the risk in lives and prestige, provides unrevealed billions in loans, grants and other deals, and in return gets from our staunch allies one vote in the UN, some kind words, and in a few cases an honor guard to give a touch of international ambience to the desert.

The Saudis and expatriate Kuwaitis appear particularly comfortable with this arrangement. Given the increase in oil prices, a few billions in Saudi aid to the Soviets is more than compensated for by the profits generated by the current situation.

Only a few reporters and politicians have perceived the ironies involved. Walter V. Robinson in the *Boston Globe* wrote a devastating description of upper class Saudi youth lolling "on Oriental rugs spread on the beach, smoking cigarettes and sipping soft drinks" while offering views such as that of a 25-year-old accountant: "Let the Americans do it. They want our oil, don't they?" His friends nodded in assent.

A medical student told Robinson: "Some say the military is no place for clever or civilized people. So a lot of us are against going into the military."

Robinson pointed out that having foreigners do work considered distasteful is not odd to Saudis. After all they already had some four million "guest workers" before the Americans arrived. Saudi troops near the Iraqi border, for example, have Filipino cooks to serve them.

And Robinson quotes a non-Saudi faculty member at King Saud University as saying:

"This is a really flabby society. Look at this university. It was designed by Westerners, built by Koreans, staffed by expatriates. The janitors are Bangladeshis. The electricians are Filipinos." And not too far away, the troops are American.

As for the Kuwaitis, Senator Patrick Moynihan put it well: "As long as our troops are sleeping on sand, it would be nice if those Kuwaiti billionaires would get the hell out of the presidential suite of the Sheraton Hotel in the Saudi resort town of Taif in favor of a more battlefield ready position."

Here at home the nature of war is being altered by the changing status of women and minorities. Lou Harris noted recently that while women were less war-prone than men during the Vietnam years, the gender gap has grown considerably -- from 12 points in the middle sixties to 25 points today. While men are about evenly split on the desirability of attacking Iraq, 73% of women are opposed to it. There are also signs that black opposition to a war will be much more solid than it was in Vietnam days, when coming out against the war was a major and ethnically controversial step for Muhammed Ali and Martin Luther King. Louis Farrakhan, for example, recently reminded his listeners that Malcolm X was a Muslim and taught by a Muslim. "In fact your consciousness has come through Muslims."

With 31% of the Army black and women so non-belligerent, the dynamics of going to war are dramatically different. An example is the recent decision of NOW to picket the Saudi embassy in protest of its anti-female policies such as not permitting women to drive.

But there are other issues as well. Germaine Greer, in the October 15 issue of the British *Independent Magazine,* reminds us that among the kin of the Emir who was given a standing ovation at the UN were two Kuwaiti princesses ordered in 1989 to pay 300,000 British pounds in damages to Laxmi Swami, a servant they kept a prisoner in their London apartment, giving her no bed, very little sleep or food, no wages, and daily whippings. Greer writes, "Nobody nows how many Laxmis are prisoners in the houses of Hampstead and Kensington, and nobody except the Anti-Slavery Society cares."

Things are not better at home. Says Greer:

"Foreign workers in the Gulf have no rights and no representation. Their fate is entirely in the hands of the employer and his family. Children are taught to discipline -- that is, to insult, pinch, slap and pull the hair of -- servants who displease them. Many servants have to carry buzzers so that they are on call at all hours of the 24. . . Now and then the *Kuwaiti Times* reported spectacular cases of servants thrown from the roof-tops, burnt or blinded or battered to death; the systematic abuse they endured every day was unworthy of remark."

NOW has exempted Kuwait from its protest, but might want to reconsider in light of Greer's article, inasmuch as slavery seems a somewhat greater offense

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Role Models

Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl Gates, who told a Senate Committee that casual drug users "ought to be taken out and shot." Asked later whether he was serious, Gates said, "Yeah, I mean it."

The New Republic, which ran a photo of Saddam Hussein on its cover after shaving off both sides of his moustache to make him look more like Hitler.

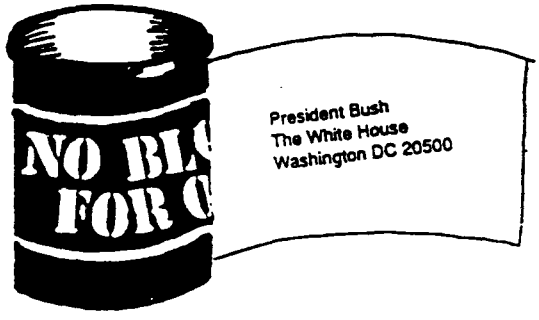
The United Methodist General Council of Ministries, which published a survey of its clergywoman claiming that 77% had experienced sexual harassment. **The Washington Post** dutifully gave the story big play in its religion section. The survey lumped "actual sexual assault or rape" with such things as "unsolicited sexual looks" and pressure for dates. And you had to read six paragraphs to discover that "unsolicited jokes with sexual content" was listed as the most frequent form of harassment. The concept of a solicited joke is fortunately not well known outside of the Methodist clergy.

than deprivation of the right to drive. Furthermore, as Greer notes, "We are sending our finest to defend the 8.6% of the total Kuwaiti population of three million or so who are allowed the rights of citizenship, namely the male descendents of males resident in Kuwait in 1920."

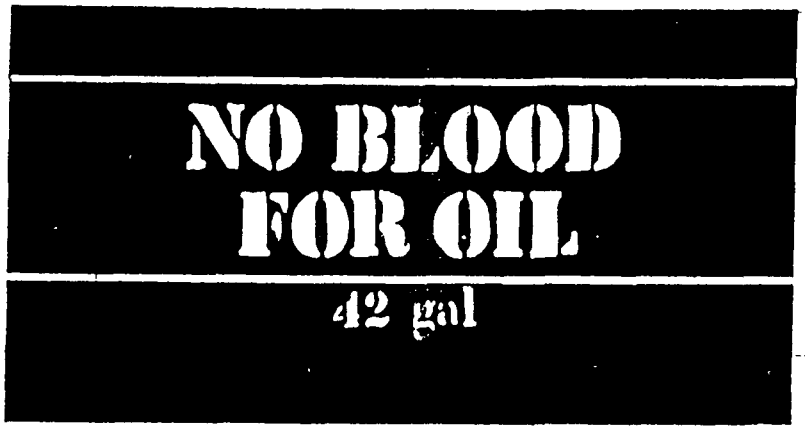
Everyone's been so busy discussing whether we should go to war that little attention has been paid to our current policy, which includes an attempt, illegal under international law, to keep food from entering Iraq and Kuwait. According to the Geneva Protocols, "starvation of civilians as a method of warfare is prohibited."

Road Signs

Princeton Survey Research asked 1208 American adults whether Congress had reached an agreement on the budget before it adjourned. Only 46% thought it had.



Barrels for Peace



The folks at the Fellowship for Reconciliation have come up with a nifty peace campaign idea: transforming an ordinary film cannister into a miniature oil barrel to send to your favorite president or other politician. Just follow these easy directions:

- Cut out the label at left and paste it in the center of a piece of ordinary paper lengthwise.
- Makes lots of copies
- Cut an ll" strip the width of the label.
- With rubber cement, glue stick or other adhesive, attach the strip to film cannisters, gluing the two ends of the strip together to form the mailing label. See picture above.
- Address the label on one side and put your return address on the other.
- Put on a 45 cent stamp and pop in the mail.
- If you're really lazy, you can write FOR at Box 271, Nyack NY 10960 (914-358-4601) for one of their sheets with four strips already prepared and addressed.

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According to a recent poll, only 38% of Panamanians would vote for the US-installed Endara government today.

Drug Busts

The position of drug czar appears to have gone from cabinet position to political retirement home in just a couple of years. Outgoing Florida governor Bob Martinez was co-chair of Bush's 1988 campaign and White Houseling Jeb Bush was chair of Martinez's unsuccessful re-election bid. But the appointment represents more than a political sinecure, however. It is roughly equivalent to naming Ed Koch to head the Civil Rights Commission. As Drug Policy Foundation president Arnold Trebach points out, after four years of Martinez's leadership, Florida remains "awash with drugs, crime, corruption and violence."

Martinez is a big advocate of military involvement in the drug war. Meanwhile Florida spends per capita below the national average for drug treatment and has some 3000 addicts on waiting lists at state treatment programs.

The price of pot has nearly doubled in the past year, which means it costs $15-$20 a joint in the Big Apple. Meanwhile you can get a hit of crack for $3 in NYC. This is a drug war?

The US government has given permission for a second AIDS patient to receive marijuana to reduce nausea and pain. A handful of people suffering other diseases have also received marijuana with government approval. Marijuana has been found to be an effective antidote to nausea and pain in certain circumstances but the neo-Puritans have made it almost impossible to obtain.

Little noted in the uproar over Iraq has been Syria's full takeover of Lebanon. Among the benefits to our new found allies will be complete control over what the State Department's narcotics office describes as "a major illicit narcotics producing country." Lebanon, the office wrote last March, "continues to supply a major share of the world hashish market. Over the past few years, Lebanon has become a more prominent opium producer and heroin processor as well as a transshipment point for cocaine from South America."

Eco-Notes

Yucca Mountain in Nevada is where the government is planning to dump its most highly radioactive waste. The project will cost $15 billion (of which $1 billion has already been spent) and is scheduled to open in 2010. But a small group of geologists, led by Jerry S. Szymanski who has been working on the project for the Department of Energy, have come to the conclusion that the plan is potentially disastrous. The details of this apocalyptic scenario was outlined in a story in the *New York Times Magazine* on November 18. This is a must read for anyone not merely concerned about the environment, but about saving the whole earth. Says the *Times*: "For years [Szymanski] has argued that ground water under the mountain could eventually well up, flood the facility and prompt a calamity of vast proportions." Says Charles B. Archambeau, a geophysicist at the University of Colorado, "You flood that thing and you could blow the top off the mountain. At the very least, the radioactive material would go into the ground water and spread towards Death Valley, where there are hot springs all over the place, constantly bringing water up from great depths. It would be picked up by the birds, the animals, the plant life. It would start creeping out of Death Valley. You couldn't stop it. That's the nightmare. It could slowly spread to the whole biosphere. If you want to envision the end of the world, that's it."

Old News

Former CIA Director Stansfield Turner told a public television program in November that Ronald Reagan "tried to assassinate several people, in my opinion," including Libyan leader Col. Moammar Gadhafi. The CIA denied it, which in itself is unusual since the CIA generally denies or admits nothing.

The CIA has become a major source of controversy in Italy with revelations of a right-wing secret army set up during the Cold War ostensibly to protect Italy from a Soviet invasion. Officials and the media are now asking whether Gladio, as it was called, and the CIA were behind a 15-year anti-Communist bombing campaign that resulted in 143 people being killed and 612 being maimed. The current Italian president, Francesco Cossiga, helped to create Gladio.

According to Reuters, Congressional investigators have uncovered evidence that US companies sold bacteria and an advanced computer for missile tests to

FIELD NOTES

Ending the Cold War at Home: A conference sponsored by over 50 civil liberties, professional, civil rights, peace, labor, religious organizations to be held at the Washington Plaza Hotel in Washington on Feb. 1-2. Speakers include Scott Armstrong, Mary Berry, Norman Dorsen. Registration: $50 w/lunch, $15 w/o lunch. Conference report available for $5. Write and make checks payable to ACLU Foundation, 122 Maryland Ave NE, DC 20002.

Coalition for Democratic Values: Conference on where the Democrats go from here. On Sat. Jan 26 at the Westfields Conference Center, Chantilly, Va. Ron Brown, Harvey Gantt, Paul Wellstone, Harriet Woods and others. $55 in advance. [CDV, 301-589-6082]

Green Committee of Correspondence: At long last this major group of American Greens has come up with a written program. It's in the winter issue of the *Green Letter*. $2. [Green Letter, PO Box 14141, San Francisco CA 94114]

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an Iraqi institution specializing in research into nuclear and germ warfare. The deals took place in 1987 and so far the Commerce Department is stonewalling the House Government Operations Committee in its efforts to find out more. Paul Rockwell, writing in the *Sacramento Bee,* notes that this sort of thing has been going on since 1982, and that arms sold to Iran by Presidents Carter and Reagan were captured by Iraq. Maybe we can capture them back and sell them to Syria.

And Rockwell adds that some of these deals, thanks to a Reagan policy, involved low interest loans in which US arms merchants got full price, banks got full interest rates and American taxpayers made up the difference. Bush has done Reagan one better; as part of his efforts to secure world backing for his Middle East escapade, he just wrote off Egypt's $7 billion military debt.

The Mediacracy

FAIR recently ran an op-ed page ad in the *New York Times* with a headline that began "Some People Worry About the Japanese Taking Over Our Media. Frankly We Think This Fear is. . ." There then followed some Japanese characters and an asterisk. A note in the bottom left corner explained that the Japanese was for "a wrong guess or miscalculation," but we're told by those who know that the phrase is roughly the Japanese equivalent of "bull shit." The *Times* made FAIR put in the asterisk and the more reserved translation.

The point of the ad, by the way, is why worry about the Japanese taking over American media when it has already "been concentrated in fewer and fewer corporate hands." Over half of US broadcasting and publishing is now controlled by less than two dozen conglomerates.

A current favorite media hit on politicians is to check out their own participation in the democratic system. *The Washingtonian Magazine* spread the net a little wider and came up with a fascinating list of chronic non-voters. Among them:

New Yorker writer Elizabeth Drew

Washington Post managing editor Len Downie, who says it's a conflict of interest.

Washington ACLU honcho Morton Halperin who hasn't voted since 1983, explaining, "I've never seen choices that were sufficiently interesting to make me vote."

PBS's Jim Lehrer

ABC's Brit Hume

On the other hand, NPR's Cokie Roberts, David Broder, Pat Buchanan and Michael Barone haven't missed an election in at least five years.

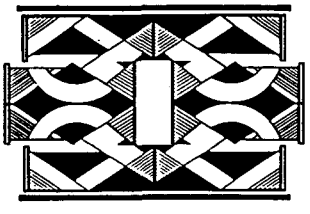
Notes from the Real World

The War on Language: A man on the morning news the other day said he hoped his project would have "impactual input."

This is the time when newspaper editors show their appreciation to advertisers by running the familiar anti-shoplifting stories and editorials. Less interesting to them is the news from an Ernst & Young survey that employee theft accounts for seven times more revenue loss than shoplifting.

Quick! Name the cities with the highest crime rates per 100,000 population. Wrong. The top ten for 1989 in order were Atlanta, Dallas, Fort Worth, St. Louis, Seattle, Portland, OR, Kansas City, MO, San Antonio, Detroit, and Boston. DC ranked 19th, and NYC 20th. Looks like Texas is the country's real crime capital.

Paul Krassner tells of the reporter asking Mother Teresa what she would like to do next. Her answer, "I'd like to direct."



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